MENTAL CHAINS

THREE MONTHS AGO, IN A SMALL TOWN IN TENNESSEE, 200 NEGROES, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HISTORY, WALKED TO THE POLLS AND CAST THEIR VOTE FOR THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES. ONE WEEK LATER EVERY ONE THAT VOTED WAS FIRED FROM HIS JOB, THROWN OFF HIS PROPERTY AND REFUSED EMPLOYMENT OR EVEN HOUSING BY EVERYONE IN THE VICINITY. TODAY MONTHS LATER THESE TWO HUNDRED FAMILIES ARE LIVING IN TENTS IN A VACANT FIELD BEING FED BY VARIOUS CHURCH ORGANIZATIONS. THERE ARE NO MORE LYNCHINGS—BUT THE SPIRIT HAS NOT BEEN QUENCHED. IN THE SOUTHERN MIND THE NEGRO IS NO MORE AN EQUAL THAN HE WAS ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

TODAY IS RACE RELATIONS SUNDAY, AND COINCIDENTALLY THE BIRTHDAY OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN, A MAN THAT BEGAN AN ISSUE THAT BURNS HOTTER TODAY THAN ON THE DAY OF HIS EMANCIPATION PROCLAIMATION. IN THE SHORT TIME WE HAVE THIS MORNING I COULD NOT BEGIN TO DEAL, IN DEPTH, WITH ALL THE FACETS OF THE RACIAL PROBLEM: IT IS A MANY SIDED PROBLEM ~~XXXXXXXXX~~ ~~XXXXXXX~~ DEEPLY ROOTED IN WESTERN CULTURE AND IN THE HEART OF EVERY WESTERN MAN. I HOPE THAT BY REVIEWING THE ISSUES AND HINTING AT A CHRISTIAN'S RESPONSIBILITY I CAN PROMPT YOU TO SPEND SOME TIME THINKING ABOUT IT.

PROBABLY THE MOST OUTLANDISH AND VICIOUS DEMONSTRATION OF RACIAL INEQUALITY IS IN THE UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA. A FEW CENTURIES AGO DUTCH EXPLORERS BEGAN TO SETTLE ON THE

SOUTHERN MOST TIP OF AFRICA AND WITH THEM THEY BROUGHT CHRISTIANITY THE DUTCH REFORMED FAITH. LOOKING TO THE OLD TEST. THEY EXTRACTED TWO PASSAGES THAT SATISFIED THEIR NEEDS. THEY FOUND THAT NOAH, HAVING BEEN DISCOVERED LYING NAKED IN A DRUNKEN STUPOR BY ONE OF HIS SONS, HAD UTTERED A HARSH CURSE AGAINST HIM: THEY ALSO FOUND THAT JOSHEA HAD DESIGNATED THE GIBEONITES, TO BE HEWERS OF WOOD AND CARRIERS OF WATER. THIS, THEY ASSUMED MEANT THE NATIVES OF THEIR NEW FOUND LAND AND THUSLY THEY FORMULATED OUT OF THEIR DISTORTED LOGIC, THE DOCTRINE OF APARTHEID. GRADUALLY THIS DOCTRINE BECAME LAW AND TODAY A HANDFUL OF CAUCASIONS EXERCISE ABSOLUTE TYRANNY OVER 12,000,000 NEGROES. AND TODAY, THIS HANDFUL STILL JUSTIFIES THEIR ARROGANT STAND FROM THE STANDPOINT OF BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY. I JUST STATE THIS IN PASSING TO NOTE THAT THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH DOES NOT, BY ANY MEANS, HAVE CLEAN HANDS IN THE AREA OF RACE RELATIONS.

OUR PROBLEM AT HOME IS GREAT ENOUGH, SO I SHALL RETURN TO OUR NATION AND OUR PROBLEM AS A PEOPLE AND AS INDIVIDUALS.

THE AMERICAN NEGRO IS THE VICTIM OF A SLAVE MENTALITY THAT HAS IMPLICATIONS NOT ONLY FOR THE THINKING OF THE WHITES BUT THAT DEEPLY INFLUENCES HIS OWN THINKING. THERE IS NO NEED FOR ME TO DESCRIBE THE TECHNIQUES OF 18 and 19th CENTURY SLAVE TRADE, ITS UTTER INHUMANITY HAS BEEN SURPASSED ONLY A FEW TIMES IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD AND I AM SURE IT IS ~~XXXXXX~~ FAMILIAR TO ALL OF YOU. FOR DECADES THE NEGRO WAS NOT EVEN

CONSIDERED HUMAN, I NEED NOT GO INTO THE TECHNIQUES OF SLAVERY EITHER. BUT WHAT WE FREQUENTLY FAIL TO REMEMBER IS THAT SLAVERY WAS NOT A SHORT TRAINED SOCIAL EVIL THAT WAS READILY STAMPED OUT--IT WAS AN INSTITUTION THAT FLOURISHED FOR MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED YEARS. IT IS NO WONDER THEN THAT IT HAD A LASTING EFFECT ON SOUTHERN CULTURE, AND ON THE MINDS OF BOTH MASTER AND SLAVE. AT THE TIME OF THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAIMATION THE NEGROES WERE LEGALLY FREED FROMTHEIR CHAINS, BUT ONE PRESIDENTIAL PROBLAIMATION COULD NOT ERASE THE DEEP SCARS OF 100 YEARS OF SERVITUDE. AS A MATTER OF FACT, ~~100 YRS~~ Nearly a cent. LATER THESE SCARS ARE STILL EVIDENT IN BOTH WHITE AND NEGRO THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY.

NO ONE WOULD QUESTION THE FACT THAT THE NEGRO IS DISCRIMINATED AGAINST IN EVERY AREA OF THE NATION, IN EVERY AREA OF LIFE. ONE NEEDS ONLY TO TRAVEL THROUGH ANY METROPOLITAN AREA TO SEE THE RESULTS.

THE NEGRO IS FREE AND EQUAL LEGALLY BUT HE IS TILL BOUND, BOUND BY MENTAL CHAINS. IN HIS OWN MIND HE IS BOUND BY THE VESTIGES OF THE SLAVE ERA--AND WHITES TOO ARE BOUND, CHAINED MENTALLY TO FLASE TRADITIONS AND STEREOTYPES superstitions THAT ALSO EMINATE FROM THE SLAVE ERA. THESE CHAINS WE MUST LOOK AT THIS MORNING AND SEE WHETHER WE HAVE THE STRENGTH TO BREAK THEM.

IN THE SLAVE ERA THE NEGRO/FOR ONE HUNDRED YEARS/LIVED AS SOME SORT OF SUBHUMAN. HIS ONLY ASSOCIATION WITH WHITE HUMANITY WAS IN THE CONTEXT OF SERVITUDE. IN PERSONAL

LIVING, WHAT HE DID HAD NO SIGNIFICANCE: WHETHER HE KEPT HIMSELF CLEAN DIDN'T MATTER, WHETHER HIS HOUSE WAS NEAT, WHETHER HE MARRIED THE MOTHER OF HIS CHILDREN, WHETHER HE WAS HUMAN SIMPLY DIDN'T MATTER. HIS TRADITIONAL HABITAT WAS A SHANTY, WELL OUT OF SIGHT OF HIS MASTERS MANSION, HIS LIFE WAS SLAVERY. THE PATTERN OF THINKING AND BEING THAT SLAVERY CREATED WAS NOT ABOLISHED OVER NIGHT. THE NEGRO WOMAN WHO PICKED COTTON DAY IN AND DAY OUT FOR 14 HOURS WAS NOT SUDDENLY TRANSFORMED INTO A NEAT AND CLEANLY SOUTHERN BELLE. ~~EVEN THE MASTER'S FAVORITE WHO WAS ALLOWED TO SLEEP IN THE HOUSE AND DRESS ELEGANTLY AS A BUTLER DID NOT THINK DIFFERENTLY AFTER HE BECAME FREE.~~ MEN whose Grandfathers, & Fathers and children were slaves, who knew nothing but a life of slavery thought not. Heredity after they became free

WHEN WE SEE A NEGRO SLUM, WITH FILTH AND SQUALOR EVE YWHERE WE DO WELL TO REMEMBER THE MENTAL CHAINS THAT ARE NOT EASILY BROKEN.

OBVIOUSLY, NO MIRACULOUS CHANGE OCCURRED IN THE THINKING OF THE WHITE MAN. A CENTURY OF BEING THE MASTER WAS NOT FORGOTTEN BECAUSE ABE LINCOLN SAID HE WAS NO LONGER MASTER. 100 YEARS LATER THESE MENTAL CHAINS STILL BIND SOUTHERN MENTALITY, TRADITIONS ARE NOT EASILY SMASHED/ WE DO WELL TO REMEMBER THIS ALSO AS WE READ ABOUT SOUTHERN EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN SEGREGATION.

WE, IN THE NORTH, HAVE NOT ESCAPED THESE MENTAL CHAINS EITHER. LOCALIZING THE ISSUE DOWN TO THE AREA OUR PERSONAL THINKING LET US LOOK AT SOME OF THESE CHAINS.

THE HUMAN MIND OPERATES IN STRANGE WAYS AT TIMES, ONE OF THESE WAYS IS ITS CONSTANT STRIVING TO CATEGORIZE EVERYTHING: TO LUMP GREAT NUMBERS IN ONE DEFINITION--TO

STEREOTYPE EVERYTHING IT ENCOUNTERS. STEREOTYPING IS PERHAPS THE MOST PREVELANT AND HARMFUL OF OUR MENTAL CHAINS. IN KKK REFERENCE TO NEGROES, OR ANY MINORITY GROUP FOR THAT MATTER, THE TENDENCY IS TO ATTRIBUTE THE SAME CHARACTERISTICS TO EVERY MEMBER OF THAT GROUP. YOU HAVE PROBABLY HEARD IT SAID THAT NEGROES ARE LAZY OR JUST NOT WUITE AS SMART AS WHITE**THIS IS A VERY COMMON AND VISCIOUS STEROTYPE: AND BY THE WAY QUITE UNTRUE.

THE RECENT RISE OF A FEW NEGROES IN THE FIELD OF ATHLETICS HAS PROMPTED MANY PEOPLE TO BELIEVE THAT THE NEGROE IS MORE COORDINATED THAN THE WHITE. PROPONENTS OF THIS VIEW POINT TO THE FACT THAT THAT FOR THE PAST FEW YEARS FOUR OUT OF FIVE ALL AMERICAN BASKETBALL PLAYERS WERE NEGROES, THAT AMERICA'S BEST SPRINTER, HURDELERS, HIGH JUMPERS AN BROAD JUMPERS ARE NEGRO AND SO ON. I HAVE EVEN HEARD SOME NAIVE STUDENTS CLAIM THAT NEGROES HAVE A SPECIAL MUSCLE IN THEIR LEGS THAT ALLOWS THEM TO JUMP HIGHER AND RUN FASTER. THIS SIMPLY IS NOT TURE, THE NEGROS PHYSILOGICALLY IS THE SAME, FROM TOP TO BOTTOM AS YOU AND I. THE PREDOMINANCE OF NEGRO NAMES AT THE TOP IN THE VARIOUS FIELDS OF ATHLETICS CAN BE ATTRIBUTED ONLY TO DESIRE AND THE KNOWLEDGE THAT TO BE RECOGNIZED THEY MUST BE GOOD. IT IS COMMON TO HEAR THAT NEGROES ARE BETTER JAZZ MUSCIANS, BETTER DANCERS, SOME CLAIM THAT NEGROES ALL HAVE A PARTICULAR ORDOR ABOUT THEM--THESE ARE ALL UNTRUTHS, HAVING NO FACTUAL BASIS, THEY ARE THE RESULTS OF STEREOTYPING. STERO. DOES NOT STOP WITH THE AREAS I'VE SIGHTED, IT PERVADES ALL OF OUR THINKING, THE MOVIE

INDUSTRY HAS HELPED CREATE A POPULAR IMAGE OF THE NEGRO, VERY HUMEROUS, HAPPY GO LUCKY OUR LAWN ORNAMENTS OF NEGRO POST BOYS SHOW TO WHAT AN EXTENT THIS HAS BEEN CARRIED. THESE ARE MENTAL CHAINS, CHAINS THAT BIND US FROM TRULY ACCEPTING A NEGRO AS AN EQUAL AND UNTIL WE HAVE BROKEN EVERYONE OF THEM WE WILL NOT HAVE FULFILLED OUR RESPONSIBILITY AS A CHRISTIAN. IN HIS VERY PERTINENT BOOK THE RACIAL PROBLEM IN XTIAN PERSPECTIV KYLE HASELDON SAYS "THE NEGRO IS NOT A COMMODITY, OR A POLITICAL BLOCK, OR A LABOR SUPPLY. HE IS NOT A CATEGORY OF CRIME, OR ILLITERACY OR IMMORALITY; HE IS NOT A HOUSING PROBLEM OR AN EDUCATIONAL PROBLEM, OR ANY OTHER KIND OF PROBLEM. THE NEGRO IS A MAN WITH FAULTS AND FRAILITIES, THE LONGINGS AND FEARS, THE HOPES AND HUNGERS AND ASPIRATIONS OF A MAN." UNTIL WE BELIEVE THIS AND ACCEPT I UNCONSCIOUSLY WE HAVE NOT TRULY FULFILLED OUR OBLIGATION.

THIS BRINGS US TO A DANGER POINT THAT IS ESPECIALLY PERTINENT ~~TO US~~. AS NORTHERNEERS WE OFTEN FEEL QUITE RIGHTEOUS, WE TELL OURSELVES HOW TERRIBLE THOSE SOUTHERNERS ARE AND HOW WE WOULDN'T ACT LIKE THAT. WE FEEL QUITE PROUD OF THE WAY WE TREAT NEGRO'S WE SAY " "HY I EVEN SAT BESIDE ONE ON THE BUS THE OTHER DAY" ETC. WE FIND IT EASY TO BE CONDESCENDING: IT IS COMFORTABLE TO DO CONTEMPLATE HOW GENEROUS WE'VE BEEN. I CAN REMEMBER ONE BITTER COLD MORNING WALKING TO HIGH SCHOOL ENCOUNTERING A LITTLE COLORED

BOY. HIS COAT WAS OPEN AND HIS HANDS WERE TOO COLD TO BUTTON IT AND HE WAS HAVING TROUBLE WITH A BADLY RUNNING NOSE. I STOPPED AND BUTTONED HIM UP AND GAVE HIM MY HANDKERCHIEF AND HOW GOOD I FELT! HOW WONDERFUL OF ME TO STOP AND HELP A COLORED BOY. HERE IS THE MOST DANGEROUS TURN IN OUR RELATIONS WITH NEGROES CAN TAKE IN THE CONTEXT OF CHRISTIANITY. WHEN WE PITY, WHEN WE ACT CONDESCENDINGLY TO A NEGRO AND THEN BOLSTER OUR SELF RIGHTEOUS PRIDE BY DOING AHELPFUL OR GRACISOUS THING WE ARE NOT ACCEPTING HIM AS AN EQUALL LEGALLY THE NEGRO IS OUR EQUAL, BUT WHEN WE LOOK DOWN IN PITY WE PUT HIM BACK ON THE INFERIOR LEVEL. IT IS EASY TO BE A GOOD PERSONX AND SMILE DOWN, IT IS ANOTHER THING INDEED TO LOOK LEVELLY AND SMILE ACROSS TO AN EQUAL.

THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE TO THIS PROBLEM IS CLEAR AND CONCISE. WE BELIEVE THAT MAN IS SOMETHING SPECIAL BECAUSE HE HAS BEEN CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD. THIS MEANS THAT MAN HAS A LITTLE OF THE DIVINE IN HIM, NOT JUST WHITE MAN, ALL MANKIND, EVERYONE OF EVERY NATION HAS BEEN CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD. THERE IS NO ROOM FOR ARBITRARINESS: THERE IS NO ROOM FOR APARTHEID, FOR SEGREGATION OR ANYTHING ELSE. ONE OF OUR PRIMARY AFFIRMATIONS IS IN THE UNITY, THE ONENESS OF ALL MANKIND.

I HAD THE PRIVILEGE, LAST YEAR OF WORKING IN A LARGE INTEGRATED CHURCH IN CHICAGO. I TAUGHT AND ADVISED A GROUP OF COLORED YOUNG PEOPLE. UNTIL THAT TIME I HAD HAD NO CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH A NEGRO AND THE ENLIGHTENING THING ABOUT THE WHOLE EXPERIENCE WAS THAT THEY WERE JUST YOUNG PEOPLE. THEY TALKED ABOUT CLOTHES, FOOTBALL GAMES, DANCES AND

TEACHERS. THEY WERE JUST BOYS AND GIRLS, JUST A PART OF THE UNITY OF MANKIND: NO DIFFERENT FROM YOU AND ME IN ANY WAY WHATSOEVER.

THE LIFE, DEATH AND MESSAGE OF JESUS CHRIST GIVE US ALL WE NEED IN OUR CONSIDERATION OF RACE RELATIONS. THE SON OF GOD APPEARED ON EARTH AS AN ACT OF RECONCILIATION: RECONSILING GOD AND MAN: AND MAN WITH MAN. THE APPEARANCE OF THE CHRIST IS THE REAF-FIRMATION THAT WE ARE ONE UNDER OUR CR ATOR. BUT THIS IS NOT ALL: JESUS CAME TO ESTABLISH A NEW COMMUNITY: ONE THAT IS CHARACTERIZED BY FORGIVENESS, UNSELFISHNESS AND LOVE. AS MEMBERS IN THIS COMMUNITY WE CAN DO NO OTHER THAN LOVEK COMPLETELY, EVERY OTHER MEMBER. THIS DOES NOT EXCLUDE NEGROS, OR PEURTO RICANS OR ANYONE. AND FINALLY THE MOST LEVELLING EVENT OF ALL, IS THE CRUCIFIXION. THAT GOD HIMSELF SUFFERED FOR ALL MEN, THAT HE BORE THE PUNISHMENT THAT WE DESERVE PROMPTS SUCH HIMILITY THAT SKIN DIDFFERENCES ARE NO LONGE IMPORTANT. IF WE TRULY TAKE SERIOUSLY OUR CLAIMS OF THE UNITY OF MANKIND, AND OF JESUS CHRIST AS SAVIOR OF ALL MEN, THEY MUST BE THE BASIS FOR OUR BEHAVIOR TOWARDS OTHER MEN. CHRISTIANITY HAS NO ROOM FOR SEGREGATION, NO ROOM FOR FEELINGS OF SUPERIORITY OR INFERIORITY.

AS I STATED AT THE BEGINNING THE AREA OF RACE RELATIONS IS A LARGE AND COMPLEX ONE: AND OF NECESSITY I HAVE LEFT MANY FACETS UNTOUCHED. THE PROBLEM GOES SO DEEP INTO THE ROOTS OF OUR CULTURE THAT A YEAR'S SERMONS WOULD NOT BEGIN TO FULLY INTERPRET IT. THERE

IS THE SOCIOLOGICAL PROBLEM OF APPROX. 1,000 SOUTHERN NEGROES MOVING INTO CHICAGO PER WEEK. THE CONSEQUENT CONDITIONS OF OVERCROWDING, SLUMS, JUNVENILE DELINQUENCY ARE CATASTROPHIC. THERE IS THE BARBARIAN ROLE PLAYED BY THE REAL ESTATE ~~BROKER~~ SPECULATOR: WHO IS MAKING MONEY HAND OVER FIST BY EXPLOITING THIS UNWANTED MASS OF SEETHING HUMANITY. THERE IS THE ROLE OF EDUCATION, AND CIVIL RIGHTS LEGISLATION AND SO ON. AGAIN LET ME SAY THAT I HOPE THE FEW PROBLEMS I HAVE CITED WILL CAUSE YOU TO THINK ABOUT THE PROBLEM IN DEPTH.

AS A NATION, THE PROBLEM OF RACE RELATIONS IS PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT AND AT PRESENT THE MOST DISASTROUS ISSUE FACING US. WITH THE RECENT UPSURGE OF NATIONALISM IN AFRICA/ THE WAVE OF INDEPENDENCE AND THE INEVITABLE APPEARANCE OF THE FACT THAT NON WHITE WILL SOMEDAY BE THE DOMINATING FACTOR ON THE WORLD SCENE/ HAVE ~~BROUGHT~~ OUR OWN PROBLEMS HAVE COME INTO THE FORE. WE CAN POUR BILLIONS OF DOLLARS INTO EMERGENCY AID, WE CAN SEND EQUIPMENT, ARMS, MEDICINE AND PERSONEL TO AFRICA, OUR STATESMAN CAN GO ON A HUNDRED GOOD WILL TOURS/ BUT ALL IT TAKES TO TURN A CONGOLESE TRIBESMAN AGAINST DEMOCRACY/ FOREVER/ IS A WELL DOCUMENTED PHOTOGRAPH OF A CROWD OF HATE FILLED WHITES JEERING AND SHOUTING SCORN AT A NEGRO SCHOOL GIRL. /AMERICAN DEMOCRACY WILL HAVE LITTLE MEANING UNTIL THIS CONDITION IS REMOVED.

AS CHRISTIANS AND AS AMERICANS WE CAN HELP BY STRIVING TO BREAK THE MENTAL CHAINS THAT

BIND OUR THINKING. AS THE NEGRO TAKES EACH STEP TOWARDS EQUALITY, AS HE BREAKS HIS CHAINS OF TRADITION WE MUST JOIN HIM, STEP BY STEP, HAND IN HAND, CUTTING LINK BY LINK: WITH THE FULL REALIZATION THAT WE ARE ONE UNDER GOD OUR CREATOR.